



Commonwealth of Kentucky

2007 NASCIO Recognition Awards Nomination  
Category: Digital Government: Government to Citizen

## Get Healthy Kentucky

*Governor's Office of Wellness and Physical Activity  
Cabinet for Health and Family Services*



Get Healthy Kentucky was created to help each and every Kentuckian develop a healthier lifestyle. The program promotes better nutrition, increased physical activity and tobacco cessation and prevention. The program website [GetHealthy.Ky.Gov](http://GetHealthy.Ky.Gov) provides targeted reliable information and resources to individuals (age appropriate) and organizations (businesses, schools) to become engaged in their own health and wellness.



## Executive Summary

For many years, Kentuckians have seen the plight of individuals with chronic conditions and the toll that it has taken on them and their families. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in our commonwealth. Our state is burdened with high cancer rates with lung cancer being the number one cancer killer. Kentucky has the 7<sup>th</sup> highest rate of diagnosed adult diabetes and it is the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death. Poor nutrition and physical inactivity have resulted in a 60% increase in obesity rates in the last 10 years.

To address these issues, Governor Ernie Fletcher and the Kentucky General Assembly created a program that would comprehensively address the widespread preventable conditions that have risen to epidemic proportions in our commonwealth. The program is called **Get Healthy Kentucky (GHK)**. The program is part of our health reform initiatives to reduce health care costs and to change the culture in Kentucky so that we can reduce long term costs.

In spring 2006, Governor Fletcher's vision for Get Healthy Kentucky became a reality when the Kentucky General Assembly unanimously passed the Governor's Wellness and Physical Activity Initiative, House Bill 646. Get Healthy Kentucky is charged with creating and implementing a statewide wellness plan for all residents, including access to reliable, unbiased information on the Get Healthy Kentucky website. In addition to this information, Get Healthy Kentucky engages residents of the state through a Governor's Challenge program focusing on tracking physical activity, better nutrition and smoking cessation challenges.

Although the website is a key component to the program, Get Healthy Kentucky is also reaching out in other ways. GHK has fostered the creation and development of the most critical area – the community. Formal relationships have been established with the Partnership for a Fit Kentucky, a public/private partnership which focuses on building healthy nutrition and physical activity environments in five venues: schools, worksites, healthcare, built environment and families, and communities. The Partnership for a Fit Kentucky covers the state through eleven regional coalitions, each fostering local health and wellness efforts, by making opportunities available to their communities while acknowledging the unique characteristics of each community and target group.

Get Healthy Kentucky is administered through the Governor's Office of Wellness and Physical Activity. The Office is divided into two areas: Prevention and Improvement and Promotion and Awareness. The Office is comprised of obesity prevention, experts in nutrition, physical activity and worksite wellness, and tobacco cessation experts who enhance public health efforts to meet national targets outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Marketing awareness and education are also critical in meeting goals. Communicating the right message at the right time through the right channels has not always been embraced effectively by the public sector. Get Healthy Kentucky is taking a new approach by designing and implementing educational information campaigns to raise public awareness and promote citizen engagement regarding the critical nature of wellness in the state.

The combined resources and reach of our internal partners provide a unique opportunity and the foundation for the success for Get Healthy Kentucky efforts. This position coupled with involvement from the corporate industry will represent a unique public/private partnership that could make substantive change across the commonwealth, benefiting all Kentuckians.



## Project Description

Rates of chronic illness, such as diabetes and heart disease combined with poor lifestyle choices have reached an alarming proportion nationwide. This is a major concern nationally, but even more troubling for Kentucky because we are leading the nation in the rates for many of these chronic illnesses. Currently, 133 million Americans have at least one chronic condition and approximately one quarter of our population has two or more chronic conditions.

Our most pervasive chronic condition, cardiovascular disease, is the leading cause of death in our commonwealth. Approximately 30% of all deaths are cardiovascular disease related; this is partially attributed to physical inactivity, poor nutrition, and tobacco usage.

Kentucky has the 7<sup>th</sup> highest rate of diagnosed adult diabetes and it is the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death. More concerning, we are beginning to see adult diseases in children such as Type 2 diabetes. It is estimated that one out of three of our youth could develop diabetes during their lifetime

Our state is burdened with high cancer rates with lung cancer being the number one cancer killer. This is due in part to our distinction of having the highest adult smoking rate in the country at 28.7%. Our smoking rates also have a direct relation to the numbers of coronary heart disease and strokes while affecting the recovery time and the healing process.

Poor nutrition and physical inactivity have resulted in a 60% increase in obesity rates in the last 10 years. In Kentucky, 63% of the population is overweight with Kentucky ranking 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation in obesity prevalence.

The cost of chronic disease is not only to the individual's quality of life. There is a significant economic cost to society as a whole. Kentucky spends over \$1 billion annually on obesity related illnesses and complications and over \$1.2 billion annually on illnesses caused or made worse by tobacco use. Billions more is wasted in productivity loss. These staggering statistics have the potential to inhibit the commonwealth's ability to recruit and retain employees and compete on a national and global economy with states and countries with a healthier workforce.

It is scientifically proven that certain actions prevent disease such as avoiding tobacco, eating healthful foods and increased physical activity. It is far more effective to initiate a wellness, prevention model. Through wellness and health promotion the reach of communication is more-broad and efficiency is greater than awaiting manifestation of illness. It is estimated that if 10% of adults began a regular walking program more than \$5 billion could be saved in costs associated with heart disease and it is 7 to 8 times more costly to pay for treatment of smoking related illnesses than for quitting.

We have all been touched by the effects of these and other chronic conditions which have one thing in common – they could be prevented or the impact lessened. The Get Healthy Kentucky program fully supports creating environments where healthy options are the norm for all Kentuckians and is working to create opportunities for transformation.

Changing individual lifestyle habits is a very difficult task. Most people are interested in living a healthier lifestyle; however, many are lacking the information they need to make the right choices and/or the motivation to get started. GHK strives to give people the opportunity to make those changes. One of the key components of the program is the website [GetHealthy.Ky.Gov](http://GetHealthy.Ky.Gov). With limited staff and funding for the program, developing a website was a logical strategy to reach the most people with the least amount of cost. However, the website must be dynamic and user friendly in order to be a resourceful tool for the program.



The goal of the website is to be the “one stop” for users to find information about healthy lifestyles. The following criteria were used in developing the site:

- 1) Provide age appropriate information and guidance by tailoring sections to specific populations (children, teens, adults, senior, schools and worksites)
- 2) Provide only information from credible sources
- 3) Be easy to navigate and find information
- 4) Be pleasing to the eye

From the main page, the user can select the appropriate health related information from a menu. They can also get more information on GHK promotions and events as well as events in their own county. Users have the option of joining “Team Get Healthy Kentucky” and receiving a personalized membership card. Members will receive monthly newsletters and special promotions from the program to keep them engaged in the program.



The main page also includes the link to the Governor’s Challenge. The Governor’s Office of Wellness and Physical Activity has partnered with the President’s Challenge program to offer all Kentuckians, regardless of their physical fitness level, the opportunity to set physical activity goals and track their progress. The Governor’s Challenge has over 100 activities to choose from including traditional activities such as running, swimming and cycling as well as gardening, housework, and other “less intimidating” activities. After completing each goal, the participant will receive a recognition award from GHK.

Currently the awards include t-shirts, water bottles and baseball caps.

The website has been operational since January 2006 and has had almost 50,000 hits through April. The Governor’s Challenge has also been operational since that time and we currently have over 5,000 people signed up for the Challenge. Over 3,000 of them had entered activity within the past week. Additional challenges addressing weight loss and tobacco cessation are being developed with the weight loss challenge scheduled to launch later this year.

Over the next several months, the website will continue to be promoted through multiple avenues, including Get Healthy Kentucky Forums with Governor Fletcher across the state. A short [Public Service Announcement](http://www.gethealthy.ky.gov/splash/govchallenge.htm), which can be found at <http://www.gethealthy.ky.gov/splash/govchallenge.htm>, has also been developed and will be distributed to GHK partners to be used to promote the program locally.

### **Significance to State Government**

Across the span of life the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, which houses GHK, has influence on virtually every Kentuckian, including: state employees through the Kentucky Employees Health Plan; Medicaid/Kentucky Children's Health Insurance Program (KCHIP) members; communities through Local Health Departments; and the senior population through the Department of Aging and Independent Living. The chronic health issues and aging population of the state will continue to have a significant drain on state resources. Without improvements in the health of our citizens, the cost for healthcare will continue to increase, leaving fewer resources for other needs of the state including education, roads, etc.

Improving the health of Kentuckians could have a direct financial impact on state government through decreasing health care costs of state employees and Medicaid recipients. Taxpayer dollars fund these costs for almost one million people in the state. Although the website will not directly save money, it is one of many tools for individuals to use to improve their health.

Also of significance is the cost of developing the website. Except for a very small amount of funding, the website was developed using existing resources. The existing Microsoft Content Management Server was used to develop the pages and design work was completed by the Cabinet's Office of Information Technology and Kentucky Interactive, LLC through an existing contract to provide these types of services. Site layout and content was developed by the Governor's Office of Wellness and Physical Activity staff.

### **Public Value of the Project**

As a result of this website, the general public now has a reliable resource to help them make healthy lifestyle choices. Information on the website can be used by individuals as well as families, schools, worksites, and faith-based organizations. The Governor's Challenge program allows everyone across the state to work towards a goal and be recognized for their accomplishments. Again, this tool can be used by individuals or groups. The tool can also be used as part of a customized program designed to meet the needs of specific groups.

The website is great way to learn about activities taking place in various parts of the state, allowing users to not only find opportunities to take part in physical activity but also become more active in their community.

Although there are many aspects to improving the health of Kentuckians, the Get Healthy Kentucky website is one tool to move the state in a positive direction. As the program becomes more established, we hope more people will come to rely on the website and the Get Healthy Kentucky program as a valuable resource for their healthy lifestyle.